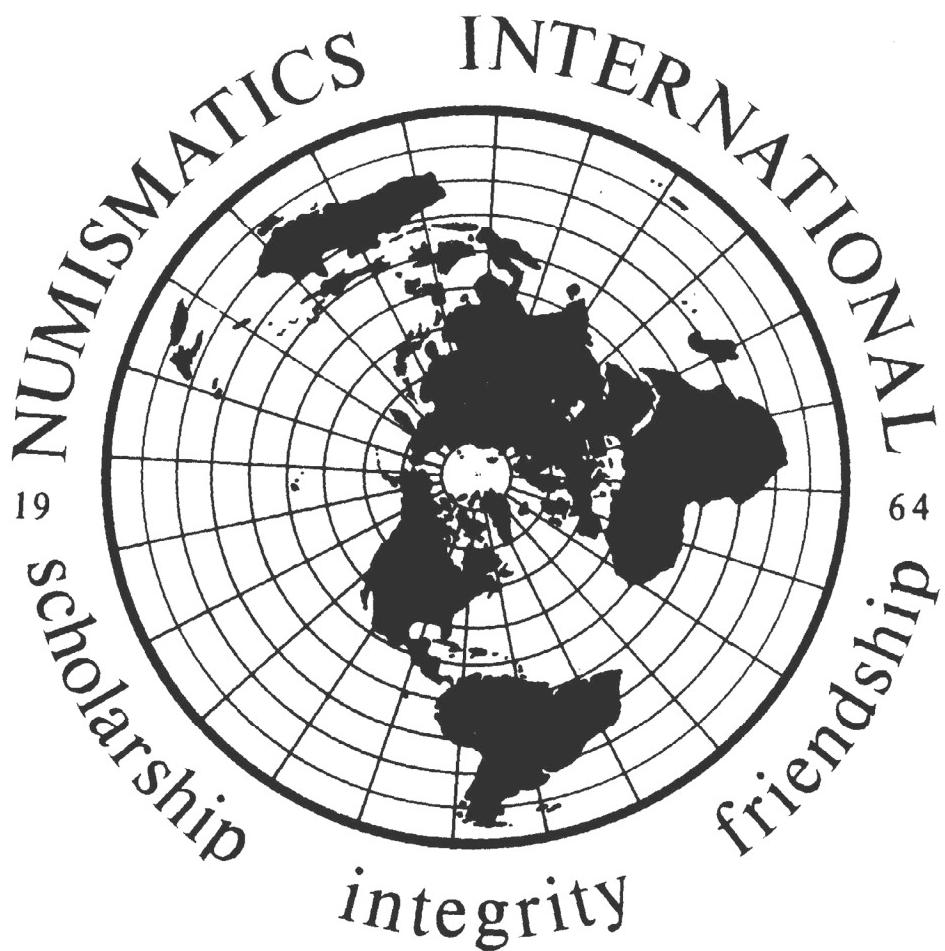


# NI Bulletin

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Numismatics International is a non-profit educational organization. Its Objectives are: to encourage and promote the science of numismatics by specializing in areas and nations other than the United States of America; to cultivate fraternal relations among collectors and numismatic students; to encourage and assist new collectors; to foster the interest of youth in numismatics; to stimulate and advance affiliations among collectors and kindred organizations; and to acquire, share, and disseminate knowledge.

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## NI

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This month's bulletin is heavy on Islamic coinage with two contributions; my thanks to Jim Martin for editing the abridged version of Jaśkowski. Simcha Kuritzky promptly responded to my request in the previous bulletin for articles from the membership by sending us "Numismatic Polygons." Robert Ronus sent us an article on the "Grisons" which is a distinct region of Switzerland. Also this month we have the last two sections of my article on *oro corriente*. I hope you enjoy all the articles in this edition. Don't forget the ANA show; see the back cover for details of Numismatic International's representation at the show.

Herman Blanton

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## NI

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### Membership Report

The following person has applied for membership. Unless objections in writing are received by September 1, 2011 the membership is effective that day.

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## **Numismatic Polygons**

### Simcha Kuritzky, NI #LM108

Looking for an inexpensive and fun specialty, or just want to spice up your collection with some interesting looking coins? While Americans tend to think of coins as round pieces of metal, many countries have issued polygonal coins. There are 17 regular shapes, all available as circulating coinage or base-metal commemoratives that are easy on the pocketbook.

#### **Definition**

The basic shapes of geometry are lines, circles and polygons. A polygon is a closed figure composed exclusively of lines that intersect two other sides only at their common endpoint. Regular polygons have all sides and angles congruent (equal).

#### **Chronology**

In ancient times, the roundness of coins was due to the tendency of hot metal to flow equally in all directions. The Chinese cast coins for two millennia which were filed down by hand while rotating the coins on a spindle, which requires a circular shape. The only polygon shape used since ancient times is the square. The earliest square coins were issued by the Baktrian Empire (around modern Afghanistan) circa 170 BCE. Square coins have been issued almost continuously in South Asia since then. Far to the west, square silver dirhems were issued by Muslims in what is now Morocco and Spain from 1130 CE until 1492. Central European states issued special strikes called “klippes” in square or diamond shape, often with the round coin in the center and a decorative border filling out the corners.

In 1794 the British firm of Boulton and Watt, whose steam-powered coin presses stamped coins under intense pressure, used a collar to prevent the coin from spreading out. The collar could be used to make the coins any desired shape, but Europeans were used to round coins. During the Nineteenth Century, tokens were issued on polygonal planchets, possibly to distinguish them from coins and avoid charges of counterfeiting. Traditionally, silver and gold coins circulated by weight, and some countries didn’t even place denominations on their coins. After nickel alloy coins were introduced in the 1850s, there was a potential for confusion with silver pieces. Some countries chose to issue the new nickel alloy coins in shapes other than round to better distinguish them.

#### **Specifics**

While some coin planchets are perfect polygons, most have rounded corners to protect hands and pockets. As vending machines have become more common, countries have produced coins with arcs instead of straight sides, or enlarged the rounded corners until they are longer than the sides. These make the coins roll like round coins, but one can still identify them by touch. In the past decade, an increasing number of polygonal coins have been precious metal commemorative non-circulating issues. However, every single shape has at least one coin that was issued for circulation. Following is a description of one or two polygonal coins for each shape.

### **Trigon** (3 sides; triangle)

While the triangle is considered one of the basic geometric shapes, it is rare in numismatics. The first triangular coin, and the only one circulating, is the Cook Islands \$2. The Cook Islands are part of the British Commonwealth and a dependency of New Zealand, whose coins are also current there. The Cook Islands introduced their own coinage in 1972 using the same sizes as their New Zealand counterparts. In 1987, the Cook Islands introduced smaller dollar and also triangular two dollar coins which portray a bottle resting in the center of a three-legged table.

### **Tetragon** (4 sides; square)

While square coins have been used in India since ancient times, the British rulers didn't introduce square coins until the end of World War One. A silver shortage prompted the British Raj to replace the silver two annas with a square copper-nickel two annas in 1918. The square coin continued to be issued only in copper-nickel until 1955 (after independence). A square half anna was introduced in 1940 and also continued to be issued until 1955; it was replaced in 1957 with a square 5 paisa coin.

### **Pentagon** (5 sides)

One of the most unusual polygonal coinages was issued in Yemen after World War Two. At a time when most countries were retiring their steam coin presses for electric ones, the Yemenites were still striking coins by hand. In 1367 AH (late 1947 CE), the Mutawakkilite Kingdom introduced pentagonal silver 1/16 and 1/8 riyal coins. This coin series ended shortly before modern coining equipment was introduced there in 1963. These are one of the very few modern circulating silver polygonal coins.

### **Hexagon** (6 sides)

During World War Two, the Belgian government in exile commissioned the Philadelphia Mint to produce a hexagonal brass 2 franc coin for Belgian Congo. Dated 1943, it was soon supplemented by round 1, 5 and 50 franc coins from other mints, all portraying an elephant walking to the left. This first-ever hexagonal coin was replaced with a round brass coin in 1946.

### **Heptagon** (7 sides)

When the British went decimal in 1971, they retained the size and composition of the 5 and 10 new pence coins, which were based on the value of the silver shilling in 1816. As a concession to inflation, the 50 new pence was introduced in 1969. Only a little larger than the 10 new pence, the British produced it with seven sides, the first ever use of heptagonal planchets. A companion seven-sided 20 pence coin was introduced in 1982, and the 50p was reduced in size in 1997. Because the British Royal Mint developed the heptagonal coin, it is also used by many Commonwealth nations and other clients of the BRM.

### **Octagon (8 sides)**

Octagons are relatively popular for coinage, probably because they are a truncated square. Although not struck on modern machinery, the Kingdom of Assam issued a number of coins for circulation on octagonal planchets until 1821. The United States issued gold \$50 octagonal coins, first in 1851-52 at the San Francisco Assay Office and then in 1915 to commemorate the Panama-Pacific Exposition in that same city.

The first nickel alloy octagonal coin was minted for Egypt. The British made Egypt a protectorate in 1914, and introduced a decimal coinage in 1916 with 10 milliemes to a piaster. In 1933, Egypt issued an octagonal 2-1/2 milliemes, but these were replaced with a round 2 milliemes in 1938.

### **Enneagon (or nonagon) (9 sides)**

Thailand issued the first nine-sided coin, a copper-nickel 5 baht dated 2515 of the Buddhist Era (1972 CE), which was replaced 5 years later by a round coin. The only coins currently issued are silver commemorative 5 euros from Austria. Despite the high denomination and precious-metal content, many of these coins were issued at face value through the banks. Austria chose a nine-sided coin to honor its nine provinces (those left to it after the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled in 1919). The coats of arms of these provinces appear on the reverse.

### **Decagon (10 sides)**

The first ten-sided coin was the 1959 Iraq bronze fils. It was followed in 1967 by the Colombia peso. At the time the highest circulating coin in Colombia was a 50 centavos. The peso had ten sides to distinguish it from the 50 centavos, which was very similar in size and design. In 1970, the 50 centavos was significantly reduced in size, and a round peso with different design was introduced in 1974.

### **Hendecagon (11 sides)**

Eleven-sided coins are a newcomer to the world scene. The United States Mint proposed a 26.5 mm dollar in brass on an eleven-sided planchet in 1977. Congress overrode the original plans and used only a hendecagonal *border* on the Anthony dollar of 1979-99. Canada's first dollar was issued in 1935. When the price of silver rose above the face value of Canada's coins, the Royal Canadian Mint substituted pure nickel and shrank the diameter of the dollar. However, the dollar was still too large so in 1987, Canada issued a new dollar coin based on the U.S. Mint's original design—a brass-coated nickel 26.5mm hendecagonal planchet. This first eleven-sided coin, called the Loonie after the bird on the reverse, widely circulates and has also been issued with commemorative designs.

### **Dodecagon (12 sides)**

The British supplemented their tiny silver three pence coin with a larger, thick brass dodecagonal coin in 1937, retiring the silver coin in 1944. The brass three penny bit was minted until 1967, when the mint shifted to decimal coins, though a special 1970

proof set was issued with all the defunct denominations. The only dependencies to issue dodecagonal three pence coins were Fiji (1947-67), Jersey (1964-66) and Nigeria (1959).

Israel issued a new series of coins commemorating historic sites in 1982. Ever mindful of symbolism, Israel made the silver half and one sheqel (which switched to the new sheqel in 1986) and gold five sheqalim coins on dodecagonal planchets to honor the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. The Bank of Israel stopped the series after 1990, but that same year Israel introduced a copper-nickel circulating five new sheqalim, which inherited the twelve sides of the gold historic-sites coin of the same denomination. The base-metal NIS5 still circulates and is the only polygonal trade coin of Israel.

### **Tridecagon (13 sides)**

Only the Czech Republic has issued a coin with 13 sides. Czechoslovakia was created out of the defeated Austrian Empire at the end of World War One. Briefly divided into Slovakia and Bohemia & Moravia by Germany's Third Reich, the country was reunited by the Allies after Germany's defeat, only to split apart amicably four years after the fall of the Soviet-backed government in 1989. Immediately upon independence, the Czech Republic began issuing a new coinage including new trade 10, 20, and 50 crown (korun) coins. These coins are only 1.5 mm apart in diameter, so the brass-plated steel 20 crowns has 13 sides to make it easier to identify. The obverse portrays the St. Wenceslas statue in Prague. Wenceslas was the Duke of Bohemia from 902 until his murder in 929 while he attended mass. His remains in the Church of Vitus attracted numerous pilgrims, and he was canonized in 985.

### **Tetradecagon (14 sides)**

Malaysia was founded as an independent kingdom in 1963 out of 14 former British possessions, including 11 provinces on the Malayan peninsula, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah (on Borneo). Singapore withdrew in 1965. Their first commemorative was issued in 1976 to inaugurate Malaysia's third five-year plan, and consisted of copper-nickel \$1 (ringgit), silver \$10, and gold \$200 coins. They show the Premier Tun Abdul Razak's bust surrounded by the 14 flags of Malaysia (13 provinces and the state itself), hence 14 sides to the coin. Razak became a barrister in England and joined the Malay civil service in 1950. In 1955, his Alliance party won Malaya's first general election and Razak became the Education Minister. There he promoted a policy of racial harmony and integration. He became Deputy Premier in 1959 and Premier in 1970. He died suddenly of leukemia in 1976, so this coin also honors his memory.

### **Pendecagon (15 sides)**

The United Arab Emirates are a conglomerate of seven tribal states on the Persian Gulf coast that was formed in 1971, and have produced small numbers of circulating coins since 1973. Their only 5 dirhams coin was issued in lunar year 1401 of Mohammed's flight from Mecca (known as the *Hijriya*, spelled variously). Since it was the first year of the fifteenth century, the copper-nickel coin has a large 15 on the

reverse and the planchet has 15 sides. The “5” of 15 has a line through it to make it look like the “h” of *Hijriya*. The falcon on the obverse is an Arab symbol, falconry being a popular sport and source of food since before Islam. Arabs capture the raptors during their autumn migration, quickly train them, then release them to migrate in spring before the hot weather kills the birds. This coin was released into circulation but was widely hoarded.

### **Icosagon (20 sides)**

The Caribbean island of Guadeloupe was settled by the French in 1635. Guadeloupe’s sugar plantations made it one of the wealthiest Caribbean islands in the 1800s. The only coins minted specifically for Guadeloupe were copper-nickel 50 centimes and francs minted in 1903 and 1921, portraying a native bust on the obverse and a palm tree on the reverse. These were introduced the same year nickel coins were first issued for France herself. The French probably used twenty-sided planchets to avoid confusion with similarly sized silver coins, which became a moot issue when France abandoned silver coinage after World War One.

### **Henicosagon (21 sides)**

Yemen has been under a number of rulers in the last century. As foreigners left, Yemen was in two sections: North Yemen, dominated by pro-Egyptian forces, and South Yemen, which had been British. In 1990, the two Yemens united using the North Yemen coinage system. In 1993, steel one, five and ten riyal coins were issued by the new government. The one and five riyal coins have twenty-one sides, while the ten riyal is round.

### **Docosagon (22 sides)**

After adopting the decimal system in 1793, France issued large bronze 10 centimes and tiny silver 20 and 25 centimes coins. France terminated the 25 centimes (or 1/4 franc) silver coin in 1848, and the 20 centimes in 1889. Intermediate denominations resumed in 1903 with a pure nickel 25 centimes coin, but the color and size were too close to the silver franc so, for the next two years (1904-5), the coin was issued with 22 sides and a slightly modified design. This apparently did not end the confusion, so when a new nickel coinage was introduced in 1914, the 5, 10, 25 (and later, 20) centimes denominations were issued on round planchets with a round hole.

### **Tetracosagon (24 sides)**

From 1932 to 1939, Brazil issued eighteen different circulating commemorative coins in denominations ranging from 100 to 5000 reis. All of these coins were round, except for the Duke of Caxias 2000 reis of 1937-38 which had 24 sides. Born Luis Silva, he was a general and statesman who fought in Brazil’s war for independence in 1823, and later served as a state governor, legislator and Minister of the Army. Both round and tetracosagonal planchets were used in 1937 and 1938, before a change in design and return to round planchets in 1939.

## Summary

There are lots of polygonal coins to collect, even if you restrict the collection to circulating pieces. You can expand a shape type set a little by separating 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 sided coins whose tops are flat (e.g., squares) versus those whose tops are corners (e.g., diamonds). There are also plenty of polygonal token issues, including Indian gold bullion from the 1960s, obsidional coinage, French and German notgeld from World War One, and Chinese gambling house tokens made in 19th Century Thailand.

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The collections of the author and of Harald Müller of Switzerland.

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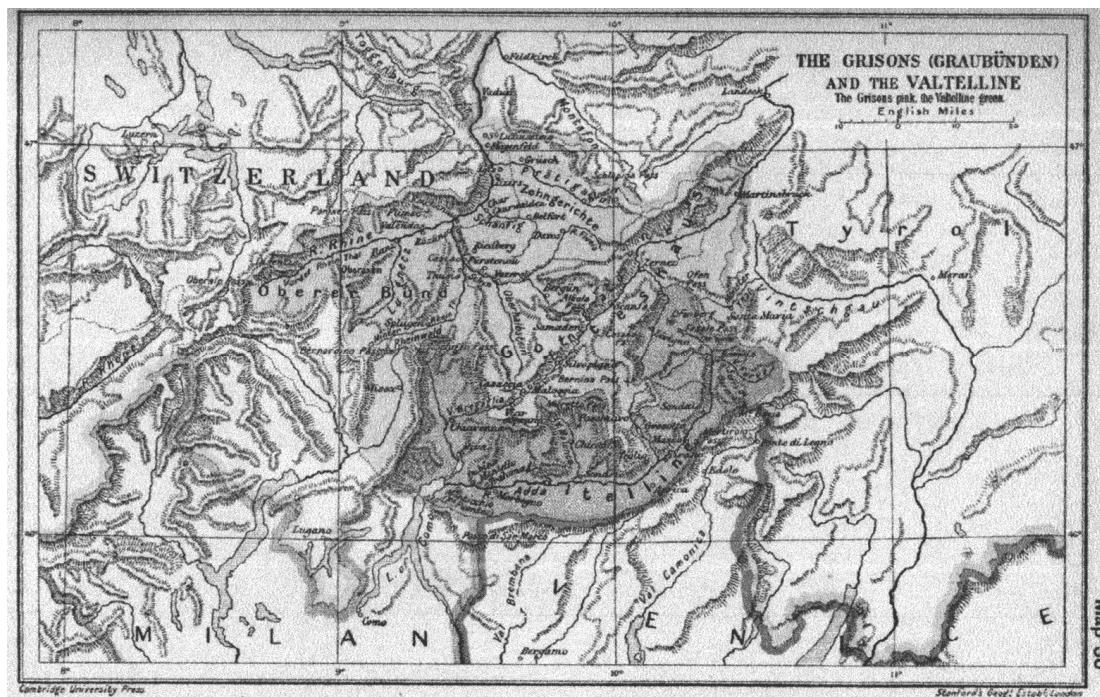
## A Swiss Numismatic Link to Venice

Robert Ronus, NI #LM139

The January/February 2011 NI Bulletin included an article I wrote about a Swiss Bundestaler featuring the coats of arms of various neighboring associated states, including Rottweil, with which the principal cantons that made up the Swiss Confederation at the time had alliances.

I recently came across a medal which celebrates an even more distant alliance between the Grisons, a canton in the east of Switzerland, and the Republic of Venice in 1603.

The Grisons (or *Graubünden* in German) is a mountainous canton best known today for famous ski resorts like St. Moritz and Davos. The northern valleys (including the capital, Chur, and Davos) speak German. The southern valleys (including St. Moritz and Pontresina) speak Romansh, a Latin language similar to Italian which developed in a few isolated valleys on either side of what is today the Swiss-Italian border. Romansh is the fourth official Swiss national language but people in this part of the Grisons all speak German and understand Italian, since you cannot go very far with just Romansh. Milan is the nearest big city for shopping and the region has old historical links with Italy. The Bernina Pass leads from the Grisons down into the Valtelline in Italy and, along with some other Alpine passes, was an important trade route.



In the sixteenth century the Grisons was a loose alliance of three leagues of barons and free communes. The League of God's House (*Gotteshausbund* in German, *Lega Caddea* or *Cadia* in Italian, *Lia de la Chadé* in Romansh; Swiss collectors will be familiar with their coins) was founded in 1367, with Chur as its capital, to resist the

authority of the Bishop who had sold various sovereign rights to the Habsburgs. The Grey League was founded in 1395 to settle the feuds of various barons and lords and included Misox (*Mesocco* in Italian) and the Abbey of Disentis, which issued coins in their own right. The League of the Ten Jurisdictions, founded in 1436 with its capital in Davos, was a union of the subjects of Friedrich VII of Toggenburg who wanted to prevent their communities being divided between several lords after the death of the last duke of Toggenburg. In 1471 the three leagues swore an oath of union at Vazerol. The Grisons was then called the Free State of the Three Leagues. Often it was referred to as the Grey Leagues (*Graue Bünden* in German), after the name of one of the leagues and so eventually it became the canton of Graubünden.

The Free State was remarkably democratic for its time. Each commune looked after its own affairs and elected by universal male suffrage deputies to an annual Diet, which dealt with matters of common concern.

The Leagues also controlled the Valtelline in Italy. This came about in the following manner. When Gian Galeazzo Visconti, after murdering his uncle Bernabò, seized the whole of the Duchy of Milan, Bernabò's son, Giammastino, fled to Chur; and in January 1386, out of gratitude for the protection granted to him by Bishop Hartmann, he ceded to the Bishop all his rights in the Valtelline, Chiavenna, Bormio and Poschiavo. The concession remained a dead letter for a long time, but in 1512, when Lodovico Il Moro was taken prisoner, Bishop Paul successfully advanced his claim. Maximilian Sforza ceded in perpetuity the Valtelline, Bormio and Chiavenna to the Bishop of Chur and the Grisons, and this cession was ratified by Francis I of France. However, in 1530 the three Leagues declared that the Bishop had forfeited his rights by failing to contribute his share in the war with Giovanni de Medici, when he threatened Chiavenna from the Lake of Como. A compromise was reached, and the Bishop surrendered his share of the sovereignty in exchange for a yearly revenue charged on the customs of Chiavenna. Thus the Leagues became sole masters of the Valtelline and the important passes over the Alps.

The relationship between the inhabitants of the Valtelline and their Grisons masters was not good. The three Leagues took it in turn to nominate the officials in the Valtelline; the places were openly sold to the highest bidder, who recouped the expense during his tenure of office. The Grisons was poor, the Valtelline comparatively rich; the officials were armed with supreme power; they were accuser and judge in one with the power of life and death and torture. The abuses and injustice became flagrant and bred in the unfortunate Valtelliners an inextinguishable hatred of their masters. This animosity was heightened by religious differences. The Protestant majority in the Grisons persistently tried to impose upon their Catholic subjects the doctrines of the Reformed faith. Protestant churches and schools were founded and Catholic church property was diverted to the support of Protestant preachers and teachers.

The ownership of the Valtelline was soon to become of strategic interest to a number of European powers. Firstly, it was a source of troops for the warring Italian states, especially Venice, who could not levy troops in neighboring states. Venice borderered on the southern side of the Valtelline for about about sixty or seventy miles. The Grisons authorities encouraged foreign recruiting and not only Venice but

also Spain, France and the Pope regarded the Valtelline as a *deposito de gente*, a people deposit. Secondly, control of the Valtelline meant control of the routes to the north through the Alpine passes. These were important for trade but also as the routes by which Spain could move Italian troops north to fight in the Netherlands and by which mercenaries from Switzerland and elsewhere could be brought down into Italy. Finally, it also controlled the main east-west road connecting Como with the Austrian Tyrol. Milan was under the authority of Spain. Spanish policy was to join hands with their Habsburg cousins' possessions in the Tyrol and thus surround Venice on the north. The Valtelline stood in the way. It was therefore a matter of life and death for Venice that the Valtelline remain in the hands of the Grisons. France and Savoy, also opposed to the expansion of Spanish power, similarly supported the Grisons, although France at times also had its own designs on the Valtelline.

In 1601 Méry de Vic, French Ambassador to the Grisons, negotiated the renewal of the treaty of 1586 with the Leagues. He proposed a change to allow passages through the Alpine passes for France and her friends, meaning the Venetians. This was rejected and the renewed treaty preserved freedom of passage through the passes for France alone and specifically not for her and her friends.

Venice was therefore forced to negotiate a separate treaty. The Republic entrusted the mission to Giovanni Battista Padavino, secretary to the Council of Ten. The Diet was sitting in Chur when Padavino arrived in June 1603. He had 4000 crowns at his disposal but he was obliged to spend 9000 before he secured the treaty; 3000 for gratuities to officials, 3500 in cash to all the voters and 2500 in feasts and drinks. It was thus he achieved his end. On August 15 the Venetian alliance for ten years was voted by twenty Grey League votes against seven, by eighteen Gotteshausbund votes against four and by all fourteen votes of the League of the Ten Jurisdictions. Under the Treaty Venice was allowed to enlist from four to six thousand mercenaries and bring them over the Passes. In exchange the Republic agreed to pay the three Leagues a yearly stipend of 3600 crowns and grant importation rights for grain and salt. Mutual freedom in both domains was to be guaranteed to all citizens of the Grisons and Venice.

Padavino returned to Venice with a large embassy from the Grisons and the treaty was ratified and sworn in an official ceremony of great pomp in the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* (Grand Council Chamber in the Doge's Palace) in September 1603. To celebrate the event, the Republic ordered the striking of seven gold medallions of a value of 20 scudi each, fifty gold medals of 6 scudi each and sixty silver coins of 6 lire each, all to be distributed as largesse, according to rank, to the deputation from the Leagues, their ambassadors and dignitaries. According to Paolucci, none of the first group have survived and only 4 specimens are known of the 6 scudi gold medal (Paol.752). The silver coins are less rare and later strikes may have been made. According to Paolucci, many are found in worn state and appear to have been used as currency.



**Medal: Silver, 42 mm. 27.04 g. Value of 6 lire**

Obv.: Lion of Venice, below in exergue 1603, in wreath. Rev.: Three oval shields in elaborate frame with the arms of the Grey League (cross), the *Gotteshausbund* (steinbock, alpine ibex) and the League of the Ten Jurisdictions (wild man), in wreath. Reference Paolucci 753.

Under Spanish pressure, the Leagues would refuse to renew the treaty when it expired in 1613. This is not the place for a full history of the tortured relations between Venice and the Leagues over the following century but a shared interest in the routes over the Alpine Passes and a shared dislike of the Habsburgs kept bringing them together. In 1706 the treaty was renewed and Venice again struck gold and silver medals for the occasion (Paol. 754 and 755). The alliance was finally broken in 1766 and all citizens of the Grisons were expelled from Venice. The Leagues remained an independent state until they joined Switzerland as the canton of Grisons in 1803.

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*Oro Corriente*  
**Part Two: Early Gold Ingots and Cut Specimens**  
**Herman Blanton, NI #LM115**

(Continued from May / June 2011 NI Bulletin, vol. 46, numbers 5/6)

This article concerns *oro corriente*, a Spanish term which literally means circulating gold. It is gold that circulated alongside coined money or in the absence of coined money during the early days of the Spanish Conquest of America. The presentation is in three parts: (1) A brief overview including definitions of the various types of circulating gold. (2) Examples of *oro corriente* with emphasis on a special seal showing the Golden Fleece and possible historical antecedents of Charles V (Charles I of Spain). (3) Additional seals on early silver ingots from the “Golden Fleece” and two other shipwrecks of the period.

**Part Two**  
**Early Gold Ingots and Cut Specimens**

Treasure recovered from Spanish shipwrecks has greatly added to the database of gold and silver specimens of coins, ingots and cut pieces from ingots. This article specifically references specimens recovered from three early Spanish shipwrecks that were carrying treasure from the Indies.

Tumbaga wreck: c. 1528. Unidentified wreck salvaged off Grand Bahama Island.

Golden Fleece wreck: c. 1550. Unidentified wreck salvaged in northern Caribbean.

Padre Island: Documented as 1554 fleet ships wrecked off Padre Island, Texas.

**“Tumbaga” wreck**

The earliest shipwreck dating to the conquest period thus far salvaged was situated northwest of Grand Bahama Island. It has been called the “Tumbaga Wreck,” after the type of gold and silver ingots that were recovered.<sup>24</sup> This wreck is dated no earlier than 1526 and likely within a few years after that.<sup>25</sup> Ingots of various mixtures of copper, silver and gold were recovered. García identifies this mixture of silver and copper as “Metal of Michoacán” and coming from the Tarascan people group in western Mexico.<sup>26</sup> Analysis performed on these pieces indicates they were made under primitive conditions as might be expected so soon after the conquest. A number of small cut gold pieces are also reported to have come from this wreck.<sup>27</sup> Though recorded in the early documents, none of these small cut pieces were known to exist (or at least not recognized) prior to the discovery and salvage of this early shipwreck.

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Footnote numbering continued from part one.

<sup>24</sup> Alan K. Craig and Ernest J. Richards, Jr, *Spanish Treasure Bars From New World Shipwrecks Volume I* (West Palm Beach, Florida: EN RADA Publications, 2003). Alan Craig developed a new name for the silver alloy ingots, “mimbres bars.” Notwithstanding this, the common name for both the gold and silver ingots remains “tumbaga.” See, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> Agustín García-Barneche, *The Tumbaga Saga-Treasure of the Conquistadors* (Winter Park, Florida: Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC, 2010), pp. 36-39.

<sup>27</sup> *Coins, Banknotes, Commemorative Medals and Treasure from Spanish Shipwrecks* (Auction Catalog; London: Christie's, April 28, 1993).

For my research I used Trabucco,<sup>28</sup> Armstrong<sup>29</sup> and Christie's<sup>30</sup> for data and images. I consulted Craig & Richards and García for analysis. A comparison of data between Trabucco, Armstrong and Christie's shows some differences. For example, the Trabucco catalog is a promotional brochure and does not have metrological data and the items illustrated are not explicitly described. The small cut pieces I describe in this article are grouped in a photograph simply described as "gold artifacts" without mentioning any provenance. One of these, a pentagonal piece, was also illustrated singly.

Apparently the Trabucco lot of small cut gold pieces did not sell as nine of the ten specimens were offered later in London by Christie's where they were cataloged individually. In addition to the cut pieces there were also silver ingots and gold ingots attributed to the same wreck.

Twelve of the thirteen gold tumbaga ingots in Christie's (lots 288-99, 287 is an ingot completely different than the others) have been reduced in size by way of material having been cut away from the ends. There are various hypotheses for this (Craig: 28) and in *my opinion* material was cut away to make smaller pieces for commerce. According to Marex data in Armstrong these gold ingots are low fineness ranging from 27.6% to 73.5% with an average of 48% gold.<sup>31</sup> These ingots show various stamps ranging from probable tax seals to single letters. For example, lot number 296 shows a partial tax seal in five places, the Roman numeral VI in six places and the single letter B in two places. The gold purity of lot 296 is listed in the catalog as 70.8% and the silver at 16.7% for a total gold & silver of 87.5%. Furthermore, lot number 292 has gold content of 29.1% but it too is marked VI. If, as cataloged, the gold purity of lot 296 is over 100% higher than that of lot 292 and yet they both bear Roman numeral VI then this marking must not be karat fineness. I agree with Craig that these ingots can be considered tepuzque (see part one of this article for definition of tepuzque) because they are not high purity gold (Craig: 22).

The best source for images is the Christie's auction catalog. On internet I discovered that two of the gold ingots and one silver ingot are in the British Museum, so these should be accessible for study. For reference:

BM Registration No.: 1993,0516.1. Note: Christie's ... lot 285. Silver ingot 1715.5 g

BM Registration No.: 1993,0516.2. Note: Christie's ... lot 289. Gold ingot 357.1 g

BM Registration No.: 1993,0516.3. Note: Christie's ... lot 291. Gold ingot 520.2 g

By fortuitous happenstance the ingot cataloged in Christie's as lot 296 has come to market in the last few days while I was proof reading this article and it will be offered in Sedwick's *Treasure Auction 10* in the autumn of 2011. Fortunately, there is time to include an image of it here.

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph P. Trabucco Auctioneers' Treasure Auction '93, Atlantic City, NJ on January 24, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas R. Armstrong. *Tumbaga Silver for Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire: the Study of a Large Trove of Early 16th Century Spanish Silver Bars Recovered from a Spanish Shipwreck off Grand Bahama Island*. (Palm Bay, Fl.: Author, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Christie's, lots 257-65.

<sup>31</sup> Armstrong "...(data) were made from micro surface rubbings and cannot be trusted to be more than skin deep." p. 22.



**Tumbaga ingot: Armstrong (Marex) number 1014, Christie's lot 296 and Sedwick's forthcoming Treasure Auction 10.**

**Figure 1 (not actual size)**

Size: 230 mm x 18 mm, 312.3 g. Close-up of partial tax stamp, Roman numeral VI and the letter B; all are stamped in multiple places presumably so that the ingot could be cut into pieces with each piece retaining some markings.

The nine gold cut pieces in Christie's (lots 257-65) weigh 2.5, 6.8, 10.0, 19.6, 20.6, 25.2, 42.0, 45.0 and 86.1 grams. All have some markings or traces thereof still showing. These markings are tax seals, Roman numeral marks and possibly other types of marks of the larger ingots from which they were cut. In *my opinion* they were cut from the type of ingots described above. As these pieces were cut into small sizes they must have been used in commercial transactions, making them early *oro corriente* and if they were made from tepuzque ingots then in *my opinion* they must be the enigmatic *tejos de tepuzque*. The pentagonal specimen illustrated in Trabucco but not in Christie's was acquired privately by Frank & Daniel Sedwick and has been written about many times (Craig: 29 and García: 24), see Figure 2.



Gold cut piece with “Crowned C” and assay mark XV with three dots vertical.

Approximately 22 mm wide, 6 mm thick.  
Mass of 23.8 g.

**Figure 2**

In 1519 Emperor Charles V ordered that gold be assayed and marked with karat fineness (Blanton: NI May/June 2011, p. 94) inferring that before this date there was no requirement that gold be marked with fineness, i.e., with karat marks. The pentagonal specimen with XV•• is interpreted as 15-3/4 Karat so this is clearly a karat mark. The twelve ingots and oro corriente in Christie's have Roman numerals no higher than VIII and none show any dots “•” which would represent quarter karats. If the ingots were made following the assay orders of Charles then the Roman

Numerals should be karat marks. If the ingots were made before the order, or in violation of the order, the Roman numerals could have another meaning such as *partida* (batch or lot number) or according to a sorting system in grades or classes.

If the Roman numerals on the ingots are indeed karat marks but none (of the twelve) show any dots for quarter karat then they were made using a different (presumably earlier) methodology than that used on the pentagonal specimen. Christie's ingot lot number 298 also suggests that the ingots are from different times or places as it was cast in a mold and is "regular" in shape. Lot 287 mentioned above as being different reminds me of the silver tumbaga ingots due to its rough surface. The variety among these specimens does not suggest they were not aboard the same wrecked ship but does suggest that the ingots and specimens were made at different times and places.

Further analysis is needed on the "Tumbaga" gold ingots to determine their purity; this would help confirm the meaning of the Roman numerals on these ingots.

On April 6th, 1526 the Mexico City Council authorized owners of *tejuelos*, which are small *tejos*, to deliver them to the Royal Foundry & Assay Office to be converted into "standard" size *tejuelos* pieces.<sup>32</sup> If any of these standard pieces were circular shaped we don't know; as yet none are known, though there may be some awaiting discovery and identification.

From the Spanish Language Dictionary, 22nd edition published by the Real Academia Española (<http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/>) the word *tejo* has several meanings. For the *tejuelo* gold the two closest definitions of *tejo* are: *Plancha metálica gruesa y de forma circular* (Thick, round metal plate) and *Pedazo de oro en pasta* (Small piece of gold bullion).

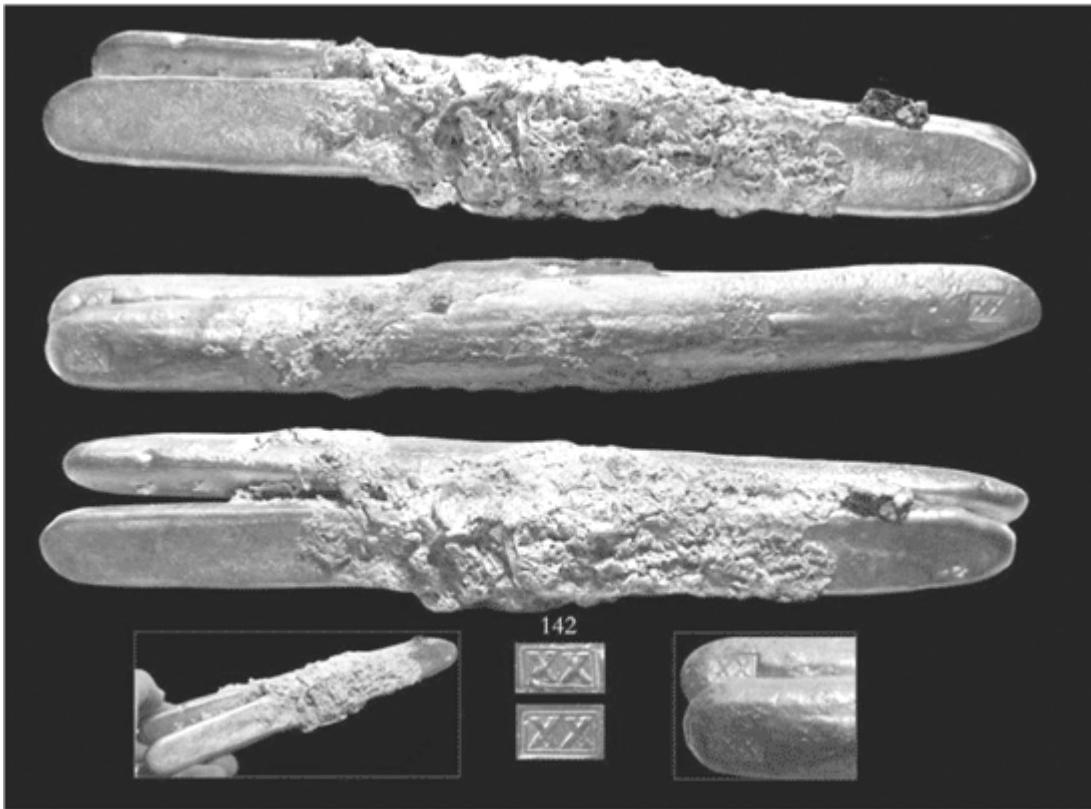
#### **"Golden Fleece" wreck, sunk ca. 1550 in the northern Caribbean**

"This wreck was nicknamed for a royal 'Golden Fleece' stamp on several of the gold 'finger' bars (ingots) it yielded. Practically all the coins from this wreck were Mexican Carlos-Juana silver coins (all assayers prior to S), including several rarities, the most important being three specimens of the Rincón 'Early Series' 8 reales of 1538, the very first 8 reales ever struck in the New World ... To date the finders of the wreck have not identified the wreck or disclosed its exact location, but they affirm it was in international waters in the northern Caribbean...Perhaps more impressive than the coins from this wreck are the few dozen gold and silver ingots it has yielded ... The varying purities of these bars are reminiscent of the 'tumbaga' bars although the later gold ingots were cast in somewhat standard shapes ('fingers') and sizes ... The gold ingots also show a fineness marking, but no tax stamps or other markings, in parts per 24, with a dot being a quarter karat. Many of the silver and gold ingots from this wreck were cut into two or more parts, presumably to divide into separate accounts."<sup>33</sup>

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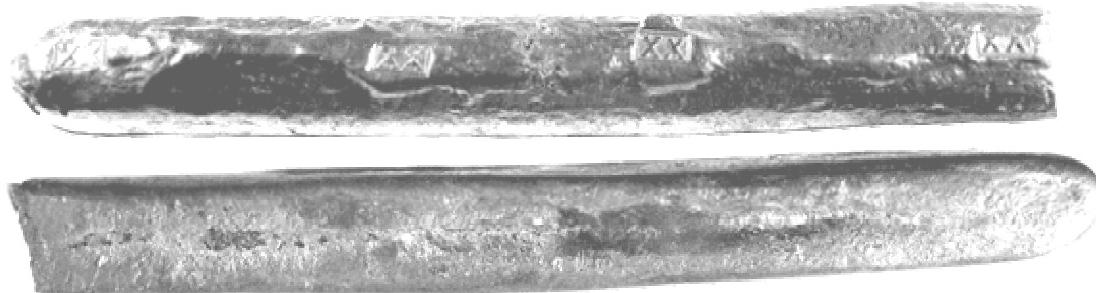
<sup>32</sup> Pradeau, p. 22

<sup>33</sup> *Treasure and World Coin Auction 9.* (Auction Catalog; Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC. Winter Park, FL. April 26-28, 2011).



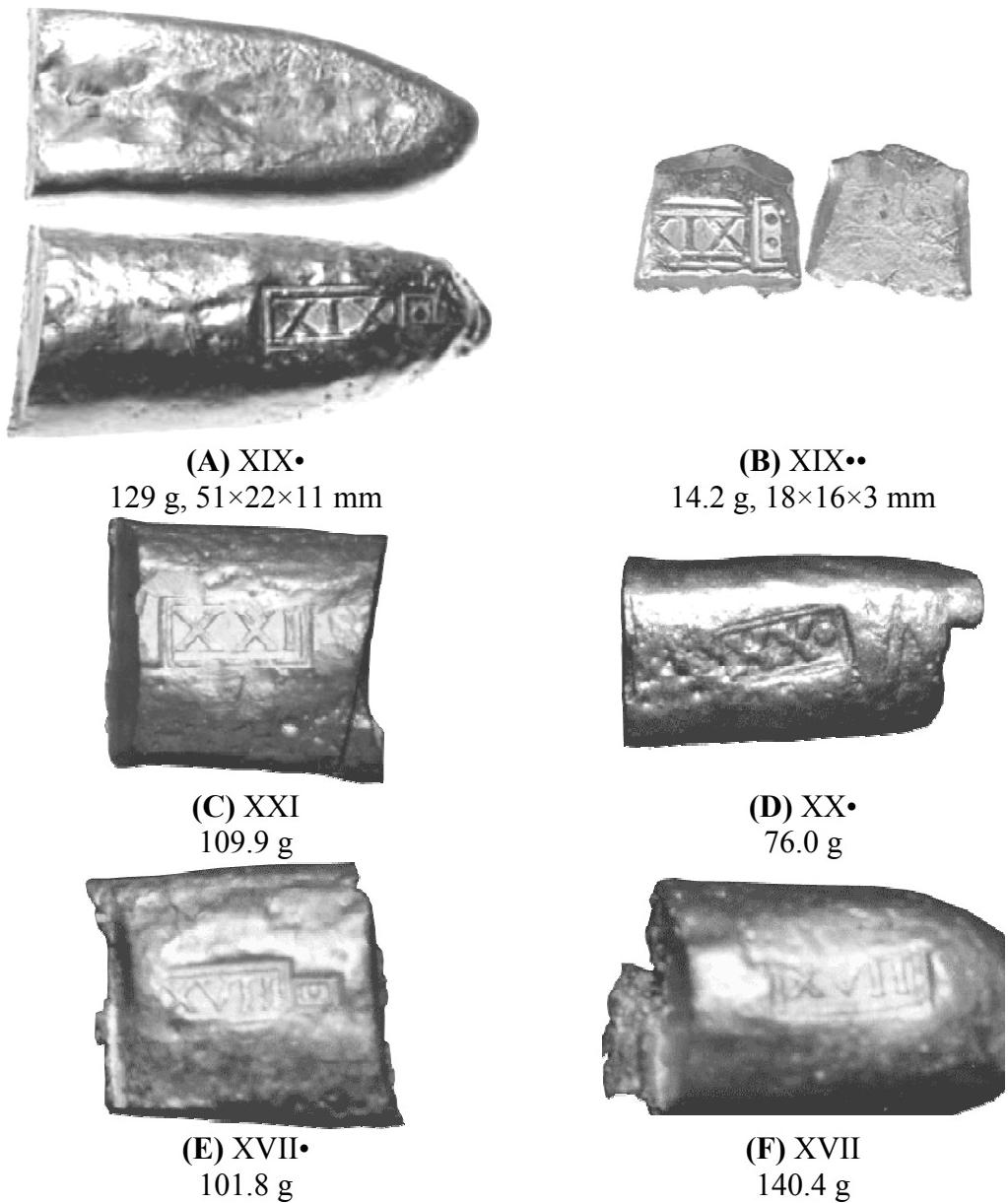
**Figure 3**  
**Gold Ingots from the “Golden Fleece” wreck**  
(Image reduced)

Pair of 20 karat ingots fused together with coral. These ingots are marked with XX for fineness of 20 karat; the mark is applied five times and evenly spaced along each ingot. The ingots do not have any official seal. It is from such ingots that *oro corriente* pieces were cut. 2396 grams, approximately 10-1/2×1-1/2 inches (265×38 mm). Sedwick *Treasure Auction* 7, lot 142.



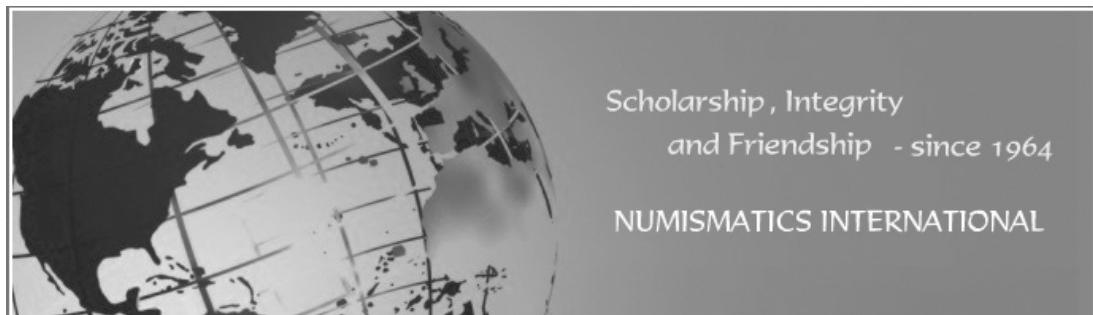
**Figure 4**  
**Gold ingot from the “Golden Fleece” wreck**  
(Image reduced)

Another ingot from which at least one piece of *oro corriente* has been cut as this ingot shows only four of the likely five fineness marks XX that it originally had. 853 grams, approximately 8×1×1/2 inches (200×25×13 mm). Sedwick, *Treasure Auction* 5, lot 92.



**Figure 5 (A-F)**

Six specimens of *oro corriente* cut from longer ingots, each showing a fineness mark. Sedwick: (5A) *Treasure Auction 5*, lot 94; (5B) *Treasure Auction 3*, lot 51; (5C-F) unpublished.



## Charles V and the Order of the Golden Fleece

Charles was born in 1500 to Philip the Handsome of Burgundy and Joanna the Mad of Castile. His father was the Sovereign of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Charles was inducted into the order in 1501 and upon the death of his father in 1506 became the sovereign of the order.

Charles inherited vast domains from his parents and grandparents; it has been said that his was an empire on which the sun never set (*El imperio en el que nunca se pone el sol*). Without discussing details of whether he was King, or was Regent for his mother, suffice it to say that after his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand II of Aragon, died (23 January 1516) Charles claimed the Crown of Aragon and Kingdom of Castile (as Charles I of Spain) jointly with his mother Joanna.



*Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*

**Emperor Charles V**

Charles made his triumphal entry into Barcelona on 15 February 1519. Three weeks later (March 5) in the Cathedral of Barcelona he opened the 19th general meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece.<sup>34</sup> He made the most of this reunion to build support for his claims to empire. Charles had ornate armorial panels made showing the arms of each knight; these were stationed above seats in the choir of the cathedral. Emperor Maximilian had died earlier the same year and his seat was unfilled. (Charles himself would soon be elected Emperor.) Four of the knights were kings; Henry VIII of England, Francis I of France, Louis II of Hungary & Bohemia and Manuel I of Portugal. These four kings were each represented by their respective ambassadors. Through solemn religious and civil ceremonies, and the swearing of allegiances he united the knights in the order as a type of Universal Christian Empire. The setting must have resembled King Arthur and his knights of the round table. At the doorway of the choir Charles had positioned his symbol, the Columns of Hercules. The atmosphere at the reunion imbued the spirit of adventure...the new Argonauts, now called *Conquistadors*, passed through the Columns of Hercules having discovered for their Caesar, Charles, a new continent where they recreated the mythical Golden Fleece which they called *El Dorado*.<sup>35</sup>



Rafael Domínguez Casas

### Choir of Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia (Cathedral of Barcelona)

<sup>34</sup> José María de Francisco Olmos, “Estudio documental de la moneda castellana de Carlos I fabricada en los Países Bajos (1517)” in *Revista General de Información y Documentación*. 2003, 13, number 2. p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Rafael Domínguez Casas, “Arte y simbología en el capítulo barcelonés de la Orden del Toisón de Oro (1519).” *Liber Amicorum Raphaël de Smedt*, 2, *Artium Historia (Miscellanea Neerlandica XXIV)*. Ed. Joost Van Der Auwera. 2001. Peeters Publishers, Leuven Belgium. pp.173-204, especially p. 204.

As Sovereign of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Charles had two of the panels in the choir made for himself. One showed a fire-steel located between the Columns of Hercules with his motto “PLVS VLTRA” below. The other shows his arms with a castle above and the fleece below. The latter looks like the model for the Golden Fleece seal, Castile above and Fleece below.

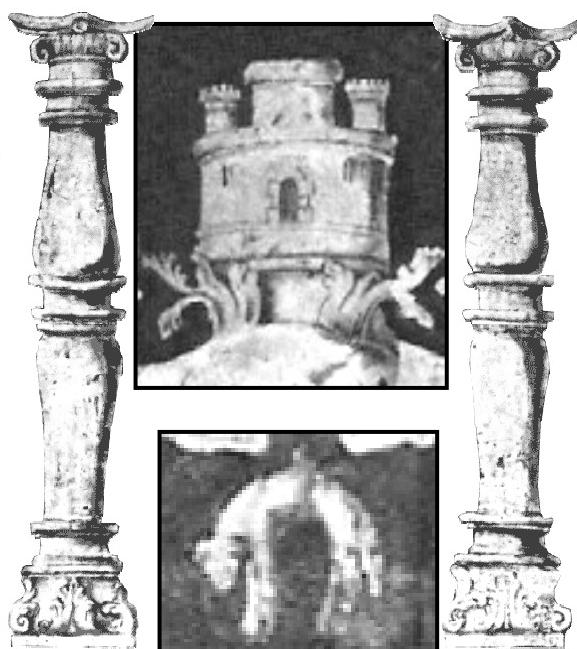


*Rafael Domínguez Casas*

#### Armorial panels of Charles I of Spain in the Choir of St Eulalia

The panel with Castle at the top and Fleece at the bottom must have been created to show a connection between Castile and Leon (Spain) and the Order of the Golden Fleece, in the person of Charles, Charles I of Spain.

If we use the Columns of Hercules from the PLVS VLTRA panel and position between them the Castle and Fleece from the Castile panel we can create a design that resembles a seal that was used on some *oro corriente*, see below for specimens.



### *Oro Corriente* with mark of the Order of the Golden Fleece

Three remarkable specimens struck with a seal showing the Golden Fleece were recovered from the same unidentified shipwreck as were the pieces illustrated in Figures 3-5. Because it uses the symbols of the Order of the Golden Fleece, a castle for the Kingdom of Castile and León and his personal device the Columns of Hercules, it is *my opinion* that this seal must have been an official Imperial Seal of Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. Never seen before their discovery among the unidentified shipwreck treasure, these are of the highest interest. The seal shows a castle from which is suspended the Golden Fleece. This resembles Charles' panel from the 19th general meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece illustrated above (Castle at top, fleece at bottom).

Each of the three specimens recovered showing the Golden Fleece mark was cut from an ingot. These have an estimated fineness of 22 k.

Ingot 1: Partial “Golden Fleece” seal showing the fleece suspended. Dimensions 22×17×9 mm with mass of 34.6 grams which is 10 ducat weight. Cut from end of longer ingot.

Ingot 2: Partial “Golden Fleece” seal showing Castle between Columns of Hercules. Mass 166.7 grams. Cut from end of longer ingot.

Ingot 3: Nearly complete “Golden Fleece” seal near middle. Mass 119 grams. Middle section from longer ingot, cut on both ends. No image available.

Never before have images of these specimens been published. Ingot 2 is known by only one image and none are available for ingot 3. Thankfully we have good images of ingot 1 which shows the fleece and is the only one close to the weight of a coin.



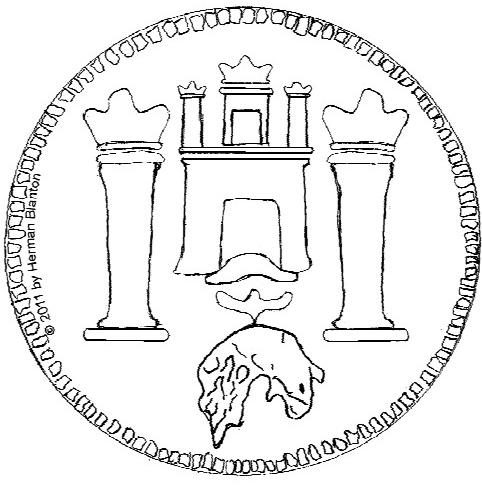
Figure 6  
Ingot 1



Figure 7  
Ingot 2



Figure 8  
Ingot 1 Enlarged

	
<b>Figure 9</b> <b>Composite of Ingots 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>Figure 10</b> <b>Sketch of Seal</b>
<b>15 mm diameter estimate</b>	

The Golden Fleece seal of Charles V has thus far been found only on gold specimens and only from the “Golden Fleece” shipwreck.

Not withstanding that I have not seen any documentation that authorized this particular seal it is *my opinion* that it must be an official seal due to its royal imperial symbols. Some may argue that it is not official due to the lack of inscription.<sup>36</sup>

### Summary of part 2

Various gold and silver ingots were recovered from the Golden Fleece wreck. One particular seal includes the fleece symbol of the Order of the Golden Fleece and it is reminiscent of the armorial panel of Charles I of Spain that was made for the 19th general meeting of the Order conducted in the Cathedral of Barcelona in 1519. This seal is known by only three specimens. No documentation has been found to connect this seal with the Order of the Golden Fleece or to explain its origin and purpose.

For more information about the 19th general meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Choir of the Barcelona Cathedral see the web page by Dr. Domínguez.

“*Arte y simbología en el capítulo barcelonés de la Orden del Toisón de Oro (1519).*” In Spanish, available on-line (6 June 2011) at:

[http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/historia/CarlosV/graf/DguezCasas/8\\_3\\_dguez\\_casas\\_fotosmini.shtml](http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/historia/CarlosV/graf/DguezCasas/8_3_dguez_casas_fotosmini.shtml)

<sup>36</sup> Craig and Richards, p. 36, when discussing seals used on silver ingots “...the complete lack of any legend eliminates it as an official tax seal.”

*Oro Corriente*  
**Part Three: Additional Seals on Early Silver Ingots**

If the seal (Part 2: Figures 9 & 10) represents Charles V and his association with the Order of the Golden Fleece some questions arise. Were other seals used? Do any relate to orders of knighthood? In part 3 of this *oro corriente* article I will illustrate some seals found on silver ingots from the same three shipwrecks listed earlier: Tumbaga c. 1528, unidentified called Golden Fleece: c. 1550 and the 1554 Fleet / Padre Island: c. 1554.



Agustín García

**Figure 11**  
**Castle with legend round: X CAROLVS : IMPERATOR**

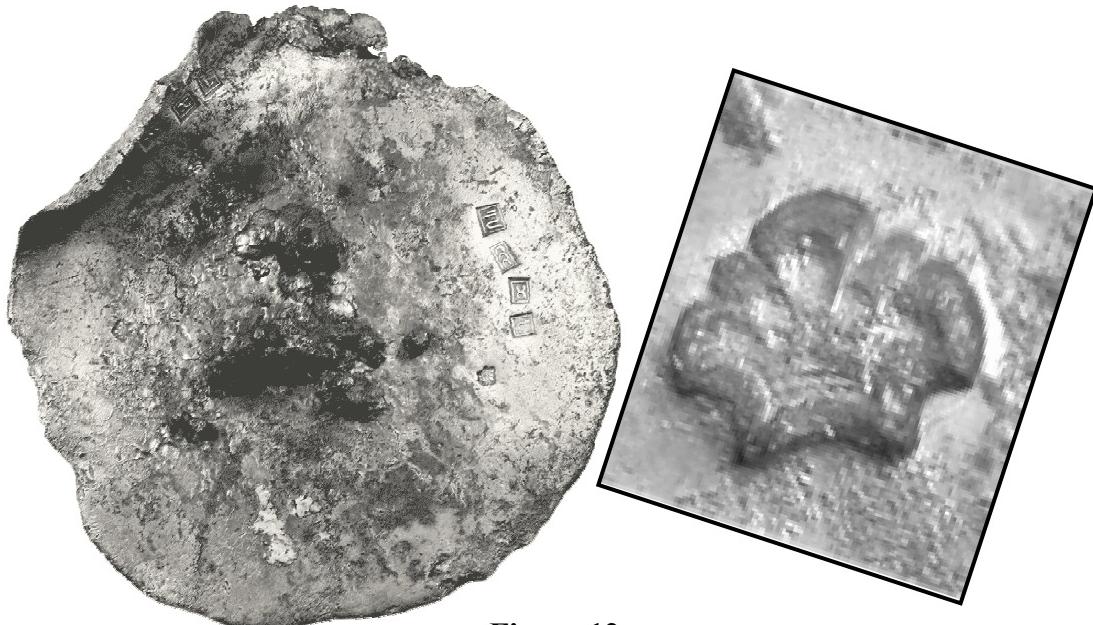
Carolvs Imperator seal (García: 54). This is a detailed seal and must have been created after Charles' election as Holy Roman Emperor (28 June 1519). It is present on many silver ingots recovered from the "Tumbaga" shipwreck. The seal is only partially visible on the ingots and the image above is a composite diagram. The design shows a castle (presumably for Castile) with inscription around.

**Order of St James**

There are multiple seals found on silver ingots with scallop shell punches. From the "Golden Fleece" wreck there is a seal described as a crown. However, it reminds me of the scallop shell of the Order of St James seen on silver ingots recovered from the 1554 Fleet shipwrecks (see Figure 13).

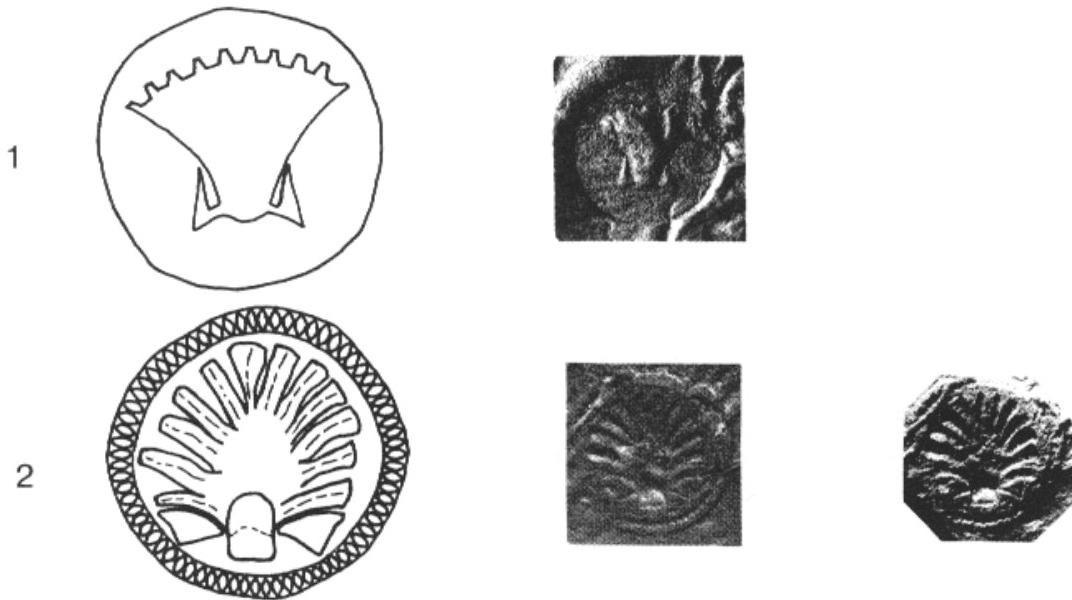
The Order of St. James (*La Orden de Santiago*) is a military order of knights founded in the 12th century. One of its goals was the spread of the Catholic faith. St James (one of the original 12 apostles, brother of John) is the patron saint of Spain. Charles was Sovereign of the Order.

Whether the seal is for the Order of St James or is a crown as Sedwick described it, it is still official as both are royal symbols.



**Figure 12**

Silver ingot from "Golden Fleece" wreck, 2988 g, 25 cm diameter, max thickness about 25 mm. Fineness mark IIU CCC X L (2340)<sup>37</sup> and "quinto" mark at four places Sedwick, Treasure Auction 8 (Oct 21-23, 2010), lot 409. Image of ingot reduced, punch enlarged. The seal is punched at four places on this silver ingot.



**Figure 13**

Republished from *Miscellaneous Papers Number 5*, Texas Memorial Museum,  
The University of Texas at Austin, 1976<sup>38</sup>  
Scallop shell seals from 1554 Fleet, approx. 15 mm diameter (Olds: 124, 1 & 2)

<sup>37</sup> Fineness based on 2400 being pure. For explanation of the fineness mark see Armstrong pp. 8-10.

<sup>38</sup> Doris L. Olds. *Texas Legacy from the Gulf, A Report on Sixteenth Century Shipwreck Materials Recovered from the Texas Tidelands*. (1976. Austin: Texas Memorial Museum.)

**Crowned C**  
**Charles I of Spain, Charles V of Holy Roman Empire**



**Figure 14**

Silver ingot from “Golden Fleece” wreck, 815 g, approx. 15 cm diameter, max thickness about 6 mm. Fineness mark IIU CCC L (2350) and crowned “C” seal applied in two places, Sedwick, Treasure Auction 4 (Nov 6, 2008), lot 143. A section has been cut away, probably to be used as *plata corriente* (circulating silver). Ingot image reduced, seal enlarged.



**Figure 15**

**Republished from *Miscellaneous Papers Number 5*, Texas Memorial Museum,  
The University of Texas at Austin, 1976**

Seal, approx. 15 mm diameter, with head of Charles V, under crown and between the Columns of Hercules with the inscription PLVS VLTRA and M, presumably for Mexico City foundry (Olds: 124, 4). The seals on 1554 fleet Padre Island silver ingots and a similar specimen in Colonial Williamsburg Foundation indicate that there is no peripheral inscription.

Multiple ingots bear this PLVS VLTRA seal, e.g., Sedwick *Treasure Auction 8*, lots 411-12.

One silver ingot with the Charles V head seal, cut to the weight of a 10 reals, was sold at auction in 2007 by Ponterio and Associates; currently it is owned by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



**Figure 16**  
Piece of plata corriente  
33.16 g  
Ponterio & Associates, Sale 143  
(September 25-26, 2007) lot 1104

**Figure 17**  
Seal (enlarge)

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

### Summary of part 3

Various gold and silver ingots were recovered from the Golden Fleece and two contemporary shipwrecks. One particular seal shows the fleece of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Some silver ingots show seals with the scallop shell, a symbol associated with the Order of St. James. Other seals show official symbols of Charles I of Spain. I've not found any documentation that links these seals with orders of knighthood other than the fact that Charles I was Sovereign over both. It seems *self evident to me* that they are official seals. Until documentation is revealed the origin and purpose of these seals remains uncertain, but for certain, they are interesting.

### Acknowledgements

Painting of Charles V, *Kaiser Karl V*, by Christoph Amberger is in the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*. ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl\\_V.\\_\(HRR\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_V._(HRR).jpg)). Charles is wearing the Golden Fleece and on the wall behind are his royal imperial arms flanked by the Columns of Hercules.

Images of Choir of Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia and of armorial panels provided by Rafael Domínguez Casas, Department of Art History, University of Valladolid.

Unless otherwise noted all pictures are courtesy of Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC. **NI**

**Aqua Marcia  
Nomos, AG**



L. Marcius Philippus. 57 BC. Denarius (Silver, 4.32 g 2), Rome. ANCVS Head of Ancus Marcus to right, wearing diadem; behind, lituus Rev. PHILIPPVS Equestrian statue to right, on aqueduct; within the arches of the aqueduct, A-Q-V-A-MAR. Babelon (Marcia) 28. Crawford 425/1. Sydenham 919.

The reverse commemorates the building of the Aqua Marcia, begun by the praetor Q. Marcius Rex in 144 (BC) and finished in 140. Its total cost was 180,000,000 sesterces, much of this coming from the vast spoils Rome received from the destruction of Corinth and Carthage, both of which took place in 146. Water from this aqueduct still supplies Rome (it was restored by Agrippa, Hadrian, Septimius Severus, Arcadius, and Honorius, among others). The statue depicted on the coin was erected in his honor atop the collecting basin that was built across from the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The head on the obverse is of the fourth king of Rome, Ancus Marcus, from whom the gens Marcia descended.

Reprinted courtesy of Nomos, AG: Auction I, Zürich, 6 May 2009, Lot 134.

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**NI**  
**Quiz**  
**Bob Fritsch, NI #LM134**

Here are a few questions to test your knowledge of Islamic States, Middle East, and the Silk Road. 1) What is the small sword-like symbol that appears on modern Saudi Arabian coinage? 2) Who was the last king of Iraq to be depicted on that country's regular-issue coinage? 3) What country recently reformed its currency at 1 million olds to one new? 4) What Silk Road country's modern coins are denominated in Mongos and Tugriks?

**NI**

## Important Coins of the Islamic World

Morton & Eden, Ltd.

As promised in the May/June Bulletin we are presenting a few pieces from the April 4, 2011 auction conducted in London by the auction house of Morton & Eden. The sale produced record prices including the highest auction price for a non-US coin. Lot number 12 sold for £3,720,000, including the buyer fee, (which near the sale date converted to US\$ 6,093,360) against an estimate of £300,000-400,000. My thanks to Tom Eden for permission to reprint this material—*Ed.*

### Two Highly Important Dinars from the 'Mine of the Commander of the Faithful'



Lot 11: UMAYYAD, TEMP. AL-WALID I (86-96h)

Dinar, Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin 92h

Obv.: In field: *la ilaha illa | Allah wahdahu | la sharik lahu | Ma`din Amir | al-Mu`minin*. Weight: 4.27 g. References: SICA 10: 487; cf SICA 2: 91 (a standard Umayyad dinar struck from the same reverse die). Condition: Minor marks on obverse, extremely fine, extremely rare and historically important. (Image enlarged).



Lot 12: UMAYYAD, TEMP. YAZID (101-105h) OR HISHAM (105-125h)

Dinar, Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin bi'l-Hijaz 105h

Rev.: In field: *Allah ahad Allah | al-samad lam yalid | wa lam yulad Ma`din | Amir al-Mu`minin | bi'l-Hijaz*. Weight: 4.28 g. References: Walker 1956: ANS.16 = Miles 1950: 66; Khalili Collection AV1032 (same reverse die). Condition: Extremely fine, extremely rare and historically important; the first example of this type to appear at public auction. (Image enlarged).

Rare, intriguing, and of great historical interest, dinars from the ‘Mine of the Commander of the Faithful’ are among the most highly prized of all Islamic gold coins. Until now, only one example, dated 92h, has previously appeared in public auction (Turath 1999: lot 8, sold for £308,000).

Dinars from the ‘Mine of the Commander of the Faithful’ fall into two groups and the two specimens offered here represent an example of each type.

The first group comprises coins dated 91h and 92h; a similar example dated 89h has been reported but has not been published. Coins of this type have the additional words *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin* squeezed in below the *kalima* in the *obverse* field. Approximately eight examples of both dates are reliably reported, including lot 11 offered here.

Coins of the second group, dated 105h, carry the longer text *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin bi'l-Hijaz* in the reverse field (a specimen dated 106h is also rumored to exist but remains unpublished). Some ten or eleven specimens of this type, including lot 12 offered here, are reliably attested. Almost all of these are now held in institutional collections. The type is of particular significance in that it is the first Islamic coin to mention a location within the present Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The meaning of *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin* and *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin bi'l-Hijaz* is still debated but there is much to be said for the simplest explanation: that the words refer to a mine belonging to the caliph (Bates 2011; contra Shamma 1995 and Ilisch 1996). It would then be logical to identify the mine in the Hijaz named on the dinars of 105h with the *Ma`din Bani Sulaym*, purchased just a few years previously by the caliph `Umar (Miles 1972, p. 266). Miles was able to locate this with considerable accuracy, south-east of Medina and north-west of Mecca. Whether this was the same mine as was mentioned on the coins of 91h and 92h is impossible to say. Miles believed it was, even though these earlier issues lack the identifying *bi'l-Hijaz* (Miles 1972, p. 266).

While the mine itself may have been located in the Hijaz, the coins themselves were surely struck by the Damascus mint, where regular Umayyad dinars were also produced. Strong evidence for this comes from the sharing of dies between the two issues. Miles (1972) noted that dies used to strike regular dinars had been used for the ‘normal’ side of *Ma`din* coins dated 91h and 105h, and indeed lot 11 in the present sale shares a reverse die with a standard 92h dinar published in SICA (Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean). This supports the view that *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin* denotes the source of the gold from which the coins were made, and does not indicate the physical location of the mint where they were actually struck. If it were the name of a mint, one might expect *Ma`din Amir al-Mu`minin* to be part of the standard mint/date formula, like Ifriqiya and al-Andalus on other Umayyad dinars.

But why was the source of the gold used to make these coins of such importance? In Bates’s words: ‘If they were intended for general circulation, there seems little point in identifying them as products of a particular mine. Who would care to know that fact, and why would the caliph care to inform them?’ There may be a thoroughly practical answer—to distinguish between state revenues and the caliph’s private resources, perhaps?—but another intriguing possibility has also been suggested.

Although the *Ma`din* issues were all produced using dies *prepared* in Damascus, it is possible that they may actually have been *struck* elsewhere. Traveling mints were not uncommon in the ancient world, and workers and equipment from Damascus could have accompanied the caliph and established a temporary mint wherever needed. Interestingly, Ilisch (1996) has noted a close connection between the dates on these dinars and the occasions when the caliph himself undertook the pilgrimage. We also know that the *Ma`din Bani Sulaym* was close to a major pilgrim highway—an inscription recording the rebuilding of this road in 304h was found among old mine-workings (Miles 1950).

Might the caliph have taken the opportunity to visit his mine *en route*, either taking gold with him back to Damascus or possibly even setting up a temporary mint there to strike these special coins? If so, then these dinars from the ‘Mine of the Commander of the Faithful’ would have the further distinction of being among the earliest dated objects relating to the Haj Pilgrimage which survive today.

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Lot 35: UMAYYAD, TEMP. AL-WALID I  
Dirham, 'Uman 90h

Obv.: In margin; pellets below *sin* of *sanat* and *sin* of *tis'ain*. Weight: 2.86 g.  
References: Klat 500; Oman 1:2 (same reverse die); SCC -. (Image enlarged).

Umayyad dirhams from Oman are the earliest Islamic coins struck in the Arabian Peninsula, and also the first dated objects to preserve the name Oman. Only two dates are known: 81h and 90h, and just a few specimens are recorded in total.

At first sight, the calligraphy on this piece is surprising for a coin struck in Oman. By the time that this piece was struck, two distinct regional styles of lettering on Umayyad dirhams had developed. Mints in the East (broadly speaking Iran and Iraq) generally used a more angular style, characterized by *lam-alifs* resembling an X with a closed base. The relatively few dirham mints active in the North and West continued the more rounded style established at Damascus, where the bottom loop of the *lam-alif* is less triangular and the uprights curve up towards the vertical. Interestingly, this dirham is stylistically linked with the Western rather than the Eastern group, in spite of Oman's geographical proximity to Fars and Kirman.



Lot 81:  
QAJAR, MUHAMMAD 'ALI SHAH  
Gold Medal for the Bombardment of the Majles, 1326h

Obv.: Uniformed bust of Muhammad 'Ali Shah three-quarters left, crossed rifles and flags to right and left, bugle, sabre, dagger, drum, crossed cannons and crossed shells below. Rev.: Lion and sun within oak and laurel wreath. Weight: 43.49 g (including suspension loop). Reference: Rabino 75.

The Bombardment of the Majles was a key event in the turbulent years of the Constitutional Revolution in Persia. Established by popular demand in 1906/1323h—with the somewhat reluctant approval of Muzaffar al-din Shah—the Majles was an elected national assembly with powers over the country's laws, budget and financial policy. The new body faced difficulties from the outset. The country's finances were in too parlous a state for reforms to be implemented and there was also opposition from the Shah, his court and groups which had profited under the old regime.

Muzaffar al-din Shah died early in 1907/1324h, shortly after signing the Majles's hastily-prepared Constitution. His successor, Muhammad 'Ali Shah, was an opponent of the Majles although the man he appointed as prime minister, Amin al-Sultan, took a more conciliatory line. But Amin al-Sultan was assassinated a few months after taking office, as law and order in Tehran began to break down. The Persian armed forces remained under the control of the Shah, and the Majles was reliant on guards drawn from a variety of militia groups, all with their own interests and agendas. The situation continued to deteriorate until the Shah attempted an unsuccessful coup late in 1907/1325h, after which British and Russian intervention temporarily restored order.

In April 1908/1325h the Shah received an ultimatum from other members of the Qajar family—if he persisted in refusing to cooperate with the Majles, they would depose him. Muhammad 'Ali responded by withdrawing to a residence a little way outside Tehran, where he summoned and arrested three Qajar princes. The Majles viewed this act as a violation of the Constitution, and militia forces rallied and took up positions in a mosque near the parliament building. Finally, on 23 June 1908 Muhammad 'Ali sent twenty men from his Cossack Brigade to arrest some of the Majles's leaders but they were driven back by fire from the mosque. The Shah responded by sending reinforcements under Russian officers, who dislodged the militia from the mosque and bombarded the Majles until it surrendered. Two of those within were executed and the others arrested.

For a while at least, the elected national assembly was abolished and the Shah controlled Tehran. But popular unrest and opposition to the Shah continued, with Tabriz now a focal point, and the Shah proved no more capable of restoring the country's dire financial state than the Majles had been. Both the British and the Russians began to put Muhammad 'Ali Shah under increasing pressure to restore the Constitution. Tabriz, which had been besieged by the Shah's troops, was relieved by Russian soldiers in April 1909/1327h. Revolts broke out in Rasht and Isbahan and revolutionary forces marched on Tehran, which they entered in July. Muhammad 'Ali Shah took refuge in the Russian legation. He was formally deposed by a newly-convened Supreme Majles and several of his chief supporters and advisors were executed.

Gold medals of this type were possibly given by Muhammad 'Ali Shah to commanders of the Russian forces which bombarded the Majles building on 23 June 1908.

NI

## Poetic Couplets on Iranian and Afghan Coins

### Stanisław Jaśkowski

#### Iran

During the *Safavid* times (1501-1722 rulers, later formally on the throne or as pretenders) Iranian coinage underwent distinct changes. One of them was a shift in the language of the coinage inscription from Arabic to Persian. This change was accompanied by a shift in calligraphy used on coinage—from *suls* to *nasta’liq*.

This led to the appearance of a new style of Persian coinage. One of the elements of this new style was a couplet which is found on coins.

This practice first appeared in India in the middle of the 15th century and was then introduced in Safavid Persia during the rule of Ismā‘il II (1576-1577/8) who replaced the *kalimah* (the “word” of Islam) with a short couplet praising Imām ‘Alī. (As far as I can determine it could have derived from Arabic poetic prayers found on early Safavid coins, or from a Persian moralistic slogan found on coins of Ismā‘il I, 1501-1524.) It became a more or less standard practice in Persian minting tradition during the reign of ‘Abbās II (1642-1666), although since they have appeared on the obverse, with the *kalimah* on the reverse.

These couplets had primarily a religious character. During the course of this dynasty, they started to include more panegyric motifs—paradoxically, the weaker the king was the more he was praised on his coins (with the exception of shah Tahmāsb II). We can also see a greater popularity of astrological motifs of the Sun and the Moon, beginning with the rulers following the Afghan conquest (1722).

The Afghans, Mahmūd and following his death in 1725, Ashraf, struck coins that were clearly influenced by Indian tradition, as they included royal titles found earlier on the Moghūl coins. Coins of the second Afghan ruler of Iran, Ashraf, also reflect his Sunni belief system and his desire to punish Shi’ites, whom he considered heretics.

In 1429 the Afghans were defeated by Nādir Shāh Afshār. He ruled through Safavid puppet-kings, Tahmāsb II (1722-1732) and ‘Abbās III (1732-1736) until 1736 when he was formally crowned the king of Iran. His coins reflected his militaristic nature, having been a person of common origin he could not boast about his genealogy, so he glorified himself as a world conqueror and the king of kings. After his assassination in 1747/8 different members of his tribe (the Afshārs) fought for the control of Iran. The longest reign of them all belonged to his son, Shāhrukh, who sat upon the throne (with interludes caused by his dethronement by various competitors) from 1747/8 till 1796; his dominion was limited mostly to Khurāsān and since 1755 he was dependent from the new Afghan Durrānī Empire.

Coinage struck by Afshār rulers other than Nādir contained both panegyric and religious elements. Coinage of Shāhrukh was also used to invoke the authority of his father, with couplets used to concentrate around the character of Imām Rizā (whose tomb and shrine are located in Mashhad, Shāhrukh’s capital).

Apart from Safavids and Afshārs, other Iranian dynasties, such as Zands and the Qājārs also used couplets on their coins, until the practice was abandoned during the rule of Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834).

## Afghanistan

In Afghanistan the practice of putting a Persian distich on a coin coincided with the beginning of this country as an independent state and the rule of Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (1747-1772) of the *Sadozai* Dynasty. His coins and those of his heirs and descendants bore distich of mostly panegyric character, although there were also religious motifs to be found. This practice survived the gradual loss of power during the rule of Sadozai rulers and subsequent change of dynasty in 1819, when Dost Muhammad Bārakzai defeated Sadozai ruler Mahmūd.

Some of Dost Muhammad's coins are quite interesting, as they clearly show this ruler's legitimization to hold the throne (a quest to bring justice to his father, Pāyandah Khān, murdered by the Sadozai), as well as political objectives and his rationale for them. During his war with the Sikhs to re-conquer lost Indian provinces he proclaimed holy war, *jihād*.

After a short interlude—caused by British intervention in 1839 that brought back the rule of Sadozai king Shujā‘ al-Mulk—he regained rule in 1843.

Dost Muhammad's heir, Shēr ‘Alī (1863-1866 and 1868-1879) and maybe his two competitors in the struggle for power, Muhammad Afzal and Muhammad A·zam were the last Afghan monarchs to strike coins with a distich. Shēr ‘Alī's couplets were especially interesting, as they contained a title *Amīr-i kull-i Amīr* (“the Amīr of all the Amīrs”) as a reference to God. It could be used illustrate the similarity between the role of God—the superior of all the rulers—to the role of a king, whose will should be obeyed as if it was God's will. Also interesting is that the grammar of this title is incorrect, as it should be written either *Amīr-e kull-i Umarā‘*, or *Amīr al-Umarā‘*, or *Amīr-i kull-i Amīr’ān*. In 1879, after a failed war against the British, Shēr ‘Alī lost his throne and his son and successor, Ya·qūb Khān, became new amīr. Neither he nor any of the later rulers of Afghanistan struck any coin with a couplet, as far as I know.

The reasons for this could be diverse. One of them could be the abandonment of imperial ambitions. This possible reason does not seem very powerful when one realizes that, for example, ‘Abd ar-Rahman in 1896 waged a military campaign against *Kāfiristān* (now known as *Nūristān*) and fought a few pretenders to his throne (such as Muhammad Ayyūb and Muhammad Is’hāq in 1880's). It would seem that a couplet placed on a coin would be a rather good way to present his slogans and ideology supporting the wars, and to show the legitimacy of his claims to the throne as opposed to those of his enemies.

Another reason could be the trend, visible in the eastern Persian-influenced part of the Muslim world, to abandon those practices which were, for example, abandoned in Iran much sooner than in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, this still does not provide us with sufficient explanation, because Iran abandoned the practice of putting distich on

coins much earlier, during the reign of Fath ‘Alī Shāh, so if Afghanistan had followed the model of Iran, it would have done so much earlier than they did in reality.

In my opinion, the most likely explanation would be centered on the fact that in 1891 a modern, mechanical mint was established in Kābul. It was being run with the help of British advisers, so it is possible that they did not see any reason to continue the practice of putting a couplet on a coin, so they abandoned it. After pondering this it becomes clear that since this date the coinage of Afghanistan is western-style money with clearly presented denominations.

Apart from appearing on couplets of central rulers, couplets also frequented the coins of provincial authorities (such as Wālī Shēr ‘Alī of Qandahār), local warlords and petty local kings. When a ruler had no real power and was just an instrument of some other political or military figure, it was often reflected in the text of a distich with a pun or a play on words (for example a warlord's name was used as an adjective or a common noun in the text of a couplet).

### **Summary**

The poems found on the coins of Iranian and Afghan rulers do not constitute a particularly broad field of research. Nevertheless they are an interesting subject for those in the fields of history, literature and the culture of the persophone part of the Muslim world. They provide us with information on the legitimization for rule and religious beliefs of various kings and rulers. Sometimes these poems contained a motto or mention objectives and values which were of particular importance for a ruler. We can even find hints of the official genealogy of a monarch or a pretender to the throne (which was one method of legitimization of his rule and a way to strengthen his claim to the crown). If the king was not an independent ruler, but the puppet of another political figure or vassal of another monarch instead, such facts were also sometimes either hinted at or put explicitly on coins.

Scholars interested in literature might find couplets which, although they cannot be regarded as great works of poetry, served practical purposes. Those whose field of study consists of language and culture could also examine terminology and phraseology used on coins: titles of kings, words referring to God, and the context of their use, etc.

To access two expanded articles by Stanislaw Jaskowski on this subject please go to the NI Yahoo Files area:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/numismatics/files/Safavid%20Couplet%20Coins/>



### **Quiz Answers**

- 1) It is the Arabic letter M" that marks the date. 2) Faisal II. 3) Turkey. 4) Mongolia.

## Member Notices

To help others in their research, I scanned all the items in my files regarding merchant and privately countermarked coins. (I have not yet scanned my photos of government countermarked coins.) I give permission for these files to be copied and for anyone to use anything I have collected that is not under someone else's copyright. The files on the disks consist of photos, rubbings and drawings that were provided by collectors; clippings from journals and numismatic newspapers and photos from auctions and fixed price lists.

The files on the disks are accurate reproductions of what was provided to me. Some of the photos are cropped because they were cropped by the person who provided the photos. Some photos are blurred because they are not in focus, etc. I belatedly discovered that my scanner cut off the extreme edges of the 8 1/2 x 11 pages on which the photos are now stored. So I had to split a hundred pages into "a" and "b" scans. After finishing the scanning, I checked all the scans to verify that they were scanned correctly.

In most cases I no longer have any idea about the original source of a photo. But when a number of items came from the same source I was sometimes able to identify the source, which is noted in the margin. More generally, the items came from over 500 individuals, many of whom are mentioned as contributors to *Merchant and Privately Countermarked Coins* (World Exonumia Press, Rockford 2003) in the Acknowledgements section. All the materials I collected over the years are included in the over 1,600 files of this series of disks—except for that book's master photos.

There are somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 scanned items, but I am not certain of the number as some are reproduced two or three times in different sizes. Many are direct scans of the actual photos in my files. Others are secondary scans that were made from photocopies—some made over thirty years ago. I tried to get a photocopy of every merchant countermark I spotted, no matter how bad the original picture. My method was to make three photocopies of each piece (light, medium and dark) and keep only the best photocopy. I then taped them in groups onto pages based on similar size, darkness, type, etc. That was the only way to "keep them under control" as I had collected so many.

The items in the higher number files are mostly later acquisitions, very dark photos, or had other problems that I could not address before the advent of photo imaging software. Recently I cropped them as well and taped them to pages. Until then, they were loose in boxes, file folders, etc., and it literally took me six weeks just to find all of them. As a result of discovering so much material over an extended time period, there was no way to put all items of the same geographical area on consecutive pages. Therefore, interested researchers will need to examine all the disks closely in order to find appropriate items.

Most of the photos that I collected and that contributors sent to me were so "bad" that I couldn't use them before now. In particular, I couldn't use color photos as there was no way until a few years ago to process them. My photocopy method turned them into black circles! With the advent of photo imaging software, I discovered that with some work it was possible to clean up most of them.

Nevertheless, I have not attempted to clean up any of the scans in these files. Why? Doing so is time consuming, requiring at least five minutes per photo. Instead, I have left all of the photos as originals and even though many are very dark, they often have enough detail in minute color variations to produce a decent result if processed correctly. But that requires individual processing. Any sort of preliminary processing of entire pages usually destroys details of individual photos.

Fifteen years ago I spiral bound a few sets of photocopies of the “good” photos and let others use them. Since then I have collected many more items, and this series of files is five times larger than my original data set. It represents virtually all the items in my physical collection of photos, which ends at about the time that internet auctions began. Since then I have focused on collecting electronic scans.

Unfortunately, I don’t know the original source of most of the items on these disks. For that matter, a number of them came to me anonymously through my publishers, and I never knew their source. So I cannot provide any further information about a coin other than what appears in *Merchant and Privately Countermarked Coins*. By consulting that book—which I am now revising—it should be possible for interested researchers to determine the denomination of most photos. That book lists all the countermarked coins I know about which consist of names, but most of the countermarks that consist of initials or symbols are not listed in that book.

I invite interested parties to send information about unlisted specimens, and I will be happy to acknowledge your help in future publications. I’m happy to provide any NI member with a copy of the five disks of scans for a nominal charge just to cover my cost.

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There is an Internet search engine called the *Portal de Archivos Espanoles* (PARES) which has been functioning since around 2007. It was and continues to be made up by teams of data entry folks who extract data from the handwritten catalogs/archive finders' aids for the major archives known to us in Spain. The project is ongoing and more data is added each year. You can locate the system at the Ministry of Culture's website: *PARES.mcu.es*.

Some full documents have been scanned in, as well as abbreviated summaries of documents, and you can call them up on your computer screen (enlarging portions of the documents to make them easier to read/decipher). They also sometimes offer English translations of these documents. Other documents are precisely enough identified by legajo and folio that you could easily order them by e-mail to the archive in question, requesting a hard copy or computer scan of the document of interest.

Stuart Menzel

Gallery Numis (Tom Galway), P.O. Box 620421, Middleton, WI 53562-0421. Fixed price list #34 is available and free to any NI member who requests it. Mention NI in your request and get a coupon for \$2 off. *gallery14@charter.net*.

## **NI Educational Programs ANA World's Fair of Money**

American Numismatic Association World's Fair of Money, Chicago, Illinois, August 16-20, 2011 Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 North River Road, Rosemont, Illinois 60018.

Numismatics International Education Program Moderator, Howard A. Daniel III, will staff a club table for NI (and IBNS, NBS & PCF) at the American Numismatic Association World's Fair of Money in Chicago. There will be about 400 free packets with world coins from NI (and a banknote from IBNS) to be given to young and new numismatists in the name of NI at the club table. And references will also be given to scout counselors to assist with those scouts working on their numismatic merit badges.

There will be an NI meeting at 12PM (Noon) on August 20 in a meeting room described in the program. All members are welcome and should bring one piece from home or one bought on the bourse to describe during the "show and tell" part of the meeting.

Howard will also be the moderator of the International Bank Note Society (IBNS) meeting at 11AM in the same room and all NI members are welcome to join it. There is often a Mini-Fest during the last 15 minutes of the meeting. This part of the meeting is conducted by collectors of Military Payment Certificates (MPC) and other military financial instruments and Military Fest Certificates (MFC) are usually "paid" to the attendees. Whether you are a collector of militaria or not, you will enjoy the Fest.

The club table will be located on the bourse and it can be designated as a meeting place for NI members, and members can also volunteer to staff it so Howard can look around the bourse and attend other meetings. Howard is looking forward to meeting new and old NI members in Chicago.



### **Library Report**

While researching the history of Numismatics International (NI) Alan Luedeking learned the NI library did not have a set of the *Journal of International Numismatics*, the publication of the Organization of International Numismatics (OIN) which merged with NI in 1981. Alan donated some issues as a start towards filling this gap. After publication of Alan's "History of NI" in the November / December, 2010 issue of the NI Bulletin other members have offered to donate additional issues of the Journal. Recently, Norman Cochrane donated a set of the *OIN-O-Gram* from volume I no 1 to volume V no 3. Thanks for this donation and support of the NI library.

David Gracey